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ABSTRACT

In a brief introduction, this article calls giving and receiving feedback one of the most important skills a manager can possess, defines feedback, provides examples of giving and receiving feedback, highlights the importance and benefits of good feedback, and directs the reader to nine selected feedback resources on the World Wide Web. The second part of the article contains a short mini-assessment center activity intended as a feedback-learning simulation. Instructions for using the 32-minute activity, along with the necessary scenarios and feedback evaluation sheets, are included. The activity is intended for any group of supervisors or team members. (Author/KC)

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ED 437 533

A Mini Assessment Center In The Giving And Receiving Of Feedback

By James J. Kirk ED. D., Glenda Clark-Hayes, & Amy Linsenmayer

A devoted husband John tells his bride of 30 years, "Honey that dress takes 20 pounds off you." His wife Betty replies, "Well, thank you darling. Those new teeth of yours make you 10 years younger." A high school driving instructor tells his star pupil, "Brandon you are the best parallel parker that I have ever had as a student." A family physician tells his patient Connie, "You really need to quit smoking." A mentor informs his protégé, "You should get your ticket punched in the sales department before applying for the new marketing position in Boston." These are but a few examples of the giving and receiving of feedback that take place on a daily basis.

Background

Feedback commonly refers to a process of giving information/opinions to a person or group in such a way as to help the parties achieve their goals. The goals can be personal goals as in the case of becoming a vice-president before the age of 30 years of age. Work goals may also be delegated by a supervisor. For example, Carol's boss told her to reduce her tardiness by 50% during the next 30 days. Sometimes the information is objective. For example, Bill told his team that they had $57,000 in returned defective product during the last quarter. At other times the information is subjective. Jane told her team that they had done an exceptionally good job in increasing sales during the past 60 days.

Because everyone has blind spots, everyone has an ongoing need for feedback. There are times and circumstances in which individuals are unable or unwilling to discern the world as it really exist. Appropriately given feedback in such instances can help people see things that would have otherwise escaped them. For example, it wasn't until her supervisor told her that Ezi realize how skilled she was in resolving customer complains. Furthermore, there are times when people are not 100% certain that what they perceive as being true is actually the case. In such instances appropriately given feedback can increase one's self-confidence in their own observations and judgments. For example, Eric only applied for a higher-level position in his company after his supervisor assured him that he was more than qualified for the job.

Managers frequently offer "excuses" why they don't provide good and regular feedback to subordinates. They may say; "I don't have the time," "If something goes wrong I will tell them," "I don't want them to get the big head," "I don't want to interrupt them," or "If I told them how good they were doing they would ask for more money." Seldom does a manager say, "I know how critical feedback is to performance improvement and employee morale, but I am just not very good at it." This is unfortunate, because the giving and receiving of feedback is a skill that can be learned and practiced. If supervisors and managers were provided more training and practice in the art of feedback giving and receiving, it is entirely possible that their units would experience significant gains in productivity and employee satisfaction.

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J Kirk

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The following mini assessment center is offered as a fun and valuable feedback learning activity. All of the needed materials and instructions are included for a 32-minute training program. The activity is appropriate for any group of supervisors or team members. Furthermore, trainers are encouraged to use their own scenarios in the assessment center. The following on-line readings provided additional information on feedback giving and receiving.

On-line Resources

Boud, D. (1999). Giving and Receiving Feedback. Retrieved September 29, 1999. Available at http://cleo.murdoch.edu.au/asu/edtech/cleo_web/mdomo/eti.arcs/af001.txt.

Department of Biological Sciences, University of Alberta (1999). Giving and Receiving Feedback. Retrieved September 29, 1999. Available at http://gause.biology.ualberta.ca/courses.hp/bot431.hp/b431fbk.html.

George Mason University (1999). Giving and Receiving Feedback. Retrieved September 29, 1999. Available at http://www.gmu.edu/student/csl/giving.html.

Katz, M. (1999). Feedback: Why is it Tough? How Can it Work Better? Retrieved September 29, 1999. Available at http://katzassoc.com/feedback.html.

New England Regional Leadership Program (1999). Exercise Three: Giving and Receiving Feedback. Retrieved September 29, 1999. Available at http://crs.uvm.edu/gopher/nerl/personal/comm/d.html.

Rainmaker Thinking, Inc. (1999). The Fast Feedback Program Focuses on Four Key Skills. Retrieved September 29, 1999. Available at http://www.rainmakerthinking.com/fourkeys.htm.

Ron-Siddel.com (1999). Giving and Receiving Feedback: The Satir Model. Retrieved September 29, 1999. Available at http://www.ron-siddell.com/feedback.html.

Stewart, D. (1999). Feedback is Free. Retrieved September 29, 1999. Available at http://www.smartbiz.com/sbs/arts/ste7.htm.

University of Colorado Health Science Center (1999). Providing Feedback. Retrieved September 29, 1999. Available at http://www.uchsc.edu/CIS/FdbkChkList.html.

Feedback Assessment Center Activity

Topic: Giving and Receiving Feedback

Feedback should be used to guide and reinforce effective behaviors and reduce or eliminate ineffective behaviors. An employee who receives effective feedback can track how closely they are matching the standards and expectations that are set for them. In the absence of feedback, employees often make up their own feedback which is often inaccurate - incompetent employees think they're doing a good job & competent employees often sell themselves short. Giving feedback gives the message that both the employee and what that employee brings to the organization is valued.

Through assessment, it is possible for employees to measure their own feedback skills. By doing so, the employee can concentrate their efforts on improving their weaker skills while keeping their stronger skills constant.

Learning Objective: Participants will be able to determine their skill level for both giving and receiving feedback.

Number of Participants: Minimum of 4 (It is preferable that the total # be divisible by 4)

Time: 32 Minutes

Required Materials: Writing Utensil, **Case Scenario Packets** (includes case scenarios and evaluations)

Activity Steps:

1. Introduce participants to the importance of effective feedback from both the giving and receiving viewpoints. Detail the criteria for giving and receiving effective feedback. Give examples.
2. Go over the learning objective for the assessment center.
3. Divide participants into groups of four.
4. Have each group arrange their seats as shown in Figure 1.1

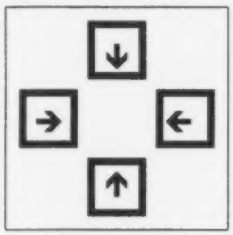

Figure 1.1

5. Assign each participant a number as depicted in Figure 1.2. This number will be used for the entire activity and corresponds to the case scenarios and the roles they will play for each.

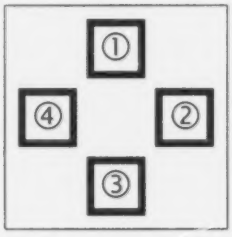

Figure 1.2

6. Explain that participants will play a different role for each of the 4 case scenarios. The roles include:
   - Feedback Giver
   - Feedback Receiver
   - Feedback Giver Evaluator - evaluates feedback giver's performance
   - Feedback Receiver Evaluator - evaluates feedback receiver's performance
7. Explain that at the start of each scenario each group will receive a **Case Scenario Packet**. This packet includes a case scenario and 4 evaluations. The role that each participant is to play is detailed at the top of each case scenario and corresponds with the number they were assigned. Each participant will play a different role and by the end of the assessment center, each participant will have played every role.
8. Explain that each participant will complete an evaluation for every case scenario. Give examples (i.e. if you are the feedback giver, you will complete the **Feedback Giver's Self-Evaluation**; if you are evaluating the feedback giver, you will complete the **Feedback Giver Evaluation,** etc.) The evaluations are included in each **Case Scenario Packet** and are marked with the appropriate participant number at the top of the page.
9. Give the first **Case Scenario Packet** to the participant of each group that was assigned the number 1 (Participant #1). Instruct Participant #1 to read the role assignments (located on the top of the case scenario) to the group and to distribute the evaluations accordingly.
10. Ask Participant #1 to read the case scenario to their group. Allow 2 minutes for this step.
11. Call for participants to start the role-play when all groups have completed reading the entire case scenario. Allow 2 minutes for the role-play. At the end of two minutes, call a stop to the role-play.
12. Instruct all participants to complete the evaluations. Allow 1 minute for this step.

13. Instruct participants to compare results of their evaluation with the appropriate member of their group based on who evaluated whom. For example, the Feedback Giver and the Feedback Giver Evaluator will compare results and the Feedback Receiver and Feedback Receiver Evaluator will compare results. For each scenario, the role assignments have been apportioned so that participants will be sitting next to the person with whom they will be comparing results. See Figure 1.3 for an example.

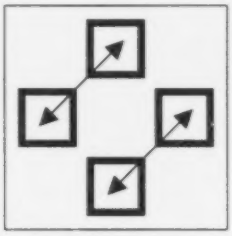

Figure 1.3

14. Instruct participants who served as evaluators to give their completed evaluation form to the person they evaluated. Explain that this will assist the individual in further assessing their strengths and weaknesses.
15. Repeat steps 9-14 for each of the remaining 3 case scenarios. Remind participants that with each **Case Scenario Packet** given out, they will play a different role. Their new role is detailed at the top of the case scenario and corresponds to the number they were assigned at the beginning of the activity.
16. Debrief the participants. Discuss possible results, i.e. individuals might find that they were very strong in one area but weak in another. Instruct participants to review their evaluation forms (both self-evaluations and the evaluations from others) from their role-plays as feedback giver and feedback receiver. Ask participants to look for similarities and differences in the results, and to lookout for patterns as well as particular items that caught their attention. Using that information, have participants identify their skill level for both giving and receiving feedback. Allow for participants to share their findings with the entire group. Conclude by discussing strategies for further improving their feedback skills.

Mini Assessment Materials

Scenario #1

Assigned Roles:

Person #	Role
1	Feedback Giver
2	Feedback Receiver
3	Feedback Receiver Evaluator
4	Feedback Giver Evaluator

The Case of the Late-Riser

You have been manager of the HR department for a large corporation for 5 years. Alex, one of the 15 people you supervise, is a loyal employee who has been with the organization for 7 years. He has been a very good employee and has always completed all of his "required" work (he has never been one to seek additional work challenges). However the real problem is that over the last month Alex has consistently been 15 to 20 minutes late for work. He has left work, as he always has, at 5:30 p.m. sharp. You are aware that due to childcare issues, he can not work later than 5:30 p.m. Alex has managed to get most of his work done on time but a couple of his reports have arrived on your desk after the due date.

Scenario #2

Assigned Roles:

Person #	Role
1	Feedback Giver Evaluator
2	Feedback Giver
3	Feedback Receiver
4	Feedback Receiver Evaluator

The Case of the Gossip Queen

Chris, a recent addition to your staff, is quickly making friends with her co-workers. She also has taken over the responsibilities for the annual office party and monthly staff birthday celebration. It is evident that she spends a lot of effort and energy on fostering social relationships with her co-workers. However, the amount of time she spends gossiping has gotten out of control. More often than not, Chris is the last one to leave the lunch and break room. Chris' reputation is spreading and several employees have started referring to her as the Original Gossip Queen. Chris' work is overall well done but you did have higher expectations for increased productivity.

Scenario #3

Assigned Roles:

Person #	Role
1	Feedback Receiver Evaluator
2	Feedback Giver Evaluator
3	Feedback Giver
4	Feedback Receiver

The Case of Casual Friday-itis

You are the new manager of the Training Department at XYZ Corporate Headquarters. Sam, one of the department's "star performers," has become increasingly slack in his appearance especially in the last couple of weeks. Since the adoption of the casual Friday attire policy two months ago, you have noticed that Sam has begun dressing down most every day. At first he was still neat in appearance, wearing khakis and a dress shirt, but the past two days, he has been coming in wearing jeans and t-shirts. Luckily, Sam's work performance hasn't shown the same decline as his appearance; however, staff members have begun to complain that if Sam is going to wear jeans, so are they. If you don't act quickly, there is going to be an epidemic of Casual Fridays.

Scenario #4

Assigned Roles:

Person #	Role
1	Feedback Receiver
2	Feedback Receiver Evaluator
3	Feedback Giver Evaluator
4	Feedback Giver

The Case of the Space Invader

Julie is one of the most enthusiastic members of your HR staff. She is a very dedicated and loyal employee who greets everyone with a smile. She's definitely on top of her game, in fact, she's right on top of anyone to whom she is speaking. The trouble is, Julie is a space invader who is totally unaware that her friendly behavior is off-putting and makes people very uncomfortable, including you. You don't want to hurt her feelings, as she is very sensitive. But at the same time, she needs to be told, especially since she has expressed her desire to move into the position of recruitment specialist, a position which you think her personality and performance match perfectly.

Person # _____

Feedback Giver Evaluation

Directions: Use the following scale to rate how the feedback giver exhibited the following behaviors.

Did Not	Somewhat	Generally	Extensively	Completely
1	2	3	4	5

_____ 1. Feedback was given directly

_____ 2. Feedback included specific details

_____ 3. Feedback was given in a timely manner

_____ 4. Feedback was objective and nonjudgmental

_____ 5. Feedback was based on specific behaviors, not on an emotional level

_____ 6. Feedback included both positive and negative comments

_____ 7. Feedback was based on behaviors over which the receiver has control

_____ 8. The Giver provided an opportunity for the receiver to respond

Person # _____

Feedback Giver's Self-Evaluation

Directions: Use the following scale to rate how the feedback giver exhibited the following behaviors.

Did Not	Somewhat	Generally	Extensively	Completely
1	2	3	4	5

_____ 1. Feedback was given directly

_____ 2. Feedback included specific details

_____ 3. Feedback was given in a timely manner

_____ 4. Feedback was objective and nonjudgmental

_____ 5. Feedback was based on specific behaviors, not on an emotional level

_____ 6. Feedback included both positive and negative comments

_____ 7. Feedback was based on behaviors over which the receiver has control

_____ 8. The Giver provided an opportunity for the receiver to respond

Person # _____

Feedback Receiver Evaluation

Directions: Use the following scale to rate how the feedback receiver exhibited the following behaviors.

Did Not	Somewhat	Generally	Extensively	Completely
1	2	3	4	5

_____ 1. Received feedback openly

_____ 2. Remained silent and actively listened to the feedback given

_____ 3. Sought clarification

_____ 4. Did not exhibit defensive behaviors

_____ 5. Received feedback objectively, without overreacting

Person # _____

Feedback Receiver's Self-Evaluation

Directions: Use the following scale to rate how the feedback receiver exhibited the following behaviors.

Did Not	Somewhat	Generally	Extensively	Completely
1	2	3	4	5

_____ 1. Received feedback openly

_____ 2. Remained silent and actively listened to the feedback given

_____ 3. Sought clarification

_____ 4. Did not exhibit defensive behaviors

_____ 5. Received feedback objectively, without overreacting